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Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 AID-05 TRSE-00 OMB-01 EB-07 /069 W
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R 051508Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 934
INFO AMCONSUL IBADAN
AMCONSUL KADUNA

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, NI
SUBJECT: VISIT TO ANAMBRA, IMO AND RIVERS STATES

SUMMARY: AFTER A FOUR-DAY VISIT TO THREE EASTERN STATES, EMBOFFS REPORT THAT THE POST-GOWON REGIME ENJOYS GENERAL SUPPORT IN THE AREA; STATES ARE PROGRESSING TOWARD RETURN TO CIVILIAN RULE; FORMER NCNC LEADERSHIP HAS QUIETLY BEGUN POLITICAL MANEUVERINGS; RECENTLY ORGANIZED LOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCILS FACE DIFFICULT STAFFING AND FUNDING PROBLEMS; SHORTAGE OF TRAINED MANPOWER IS SLOWING PACE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT; AND AMERICAN INVESTMENT AND OFFICIAL PRESENCE IN AREA ARE DESIRED.
END SUMMARY.

1. DCM AND POLCOUNS SPENT FOUR DAYS (APRIL 26-29) TRAVELING IN ANAMBRA, IMO AND RIVERS STATES. THEY MET WITH SECRETARIES TO THE MILITARY GOVERNMENTS (SMGS) AND PERMSECS IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND FINANCE MINISTRIES IN ENUGU AND PORT HARCOURT; CALLED ON PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION AND COMMISSIONER FOR ESTABLISHMENTS IN ENUGU; HAD TALKS WITH SECRETARY TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCIL IN ONITSHA; AND VISITED UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA (NSUKKA). FOLLOWING OBSERVATIONS MAY BE OF INTEREST TO THE DEPARTMENT:
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2. ATTITUDES: THE POST-GOWON FMG ENJOYS GENERAL APPROVAL. "THINGS ARE BETTER SINCE THE NEW REGIME TOOK OVER" IS THE COMMON THEME, PARTICULARLY IN IBO AREAS. GOWON IS RESPECTED FOR HAVING SAVED DEFEATED BIAFRANS FROM REVENGE-MINDED FEDERAL FORCES BUT FOR VERY LITTLE ELSE. HIS CHOICE OF GOVERNOR OF FORMER EAST CENTRAL STATE, UKAPABI ASIKA, IS INTENSELY DISLIKED AND ASIKA'S

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CORRUPT ADMINISTRATION BLAMED FOR PREVIOUS SLOW PACE OF RECON-
STRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT. THE FEELING OF BEING NEGLECTED BY
THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IS DIMINISHING AS RESULTS OF INCREASED
FEDERAL FUNDING FOR NEEDED PROJECTS SUCH AS ROAD CONSTRUCTION
BECOME EVIDENT. WAR MEMORIES REMAIN VERY REAL FOR MOST IBOS,
ONLY SOME OF WHOM WILL EVEN GRUDGINGLY ADMIT THAT THE SECURITY
THEY SOUGHT THROUGH SECESSION IS NOW BEING PROVIDED BY FMG. IBOS
APPEAR DETERMINED TO PLAY A PART IN A CIVILIAN RUN NIGERIA AND
ARE SEEKING TO REGAIN SOME OF THEIR PRE-WAR INFLUENCE IN
GOVERNMENT, COMMERCE, AND INDUSTRY.

3. POLITICAL ACTIVITY: LEADERS OF BANNED NCNC HAVE QUIETLY
CONTACTED FELLOW POLITICIANS IN NORTHERN AND EASTERN NIGERIA.
PURPOSE OF THESE FEELERS IS TO FORGE ALLIANCES WITH GROUPS IN O-
THER PARTS OF THE COUNTRY IN PREPARATION FOR THE FORMATION OF
"NATIONAL" POLITICAL PARTIES SCHEDULED FOR OCTOBER OF NEXT YEAR.
NAMES SPECIFICALLY MENTIONED WERE AMINU KANO AND J.S. TARKA BUT
AN ATTEMPT TO REVIVE THE FORMER NCNC/NPC ALLIANCE IS PROBABLY
ALSO UNDERWAY. A FORMER NCNC PARLIAMENTARY-SECRETARY IN
EASTERN HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY AGREED THAT PARTY PLATFORMS WITH
COUNTRY-WIDE APPEAL WOULD BE FIDDICULT TO DEVISE SINCE LOCAL
CONSIDERATIONS DOMINATE NIGERIAN POLITICS. HE EXPRESSED THE
VIEW, HOWEVER, THAT THE ALLIANCES NOW BEING ARRANGED WOULD PASS
THE TEST OF A NATIONAL PARTY.

4. CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY: THE CONCERN WHICH HAS BEEN VOICED
IN SOME OTHER PARTS OF THE COUNTRY ABOUT THE COMPETENCE OF LOCAL
GOVERNMENT COUNCILS TO SELECT GOOD DELEGATES TO THE CONSTITUENT
ASSEMBLY (CA) WAS NOT REPEATED IN THE EAST. THERE IS IN FACT
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CONSIDERABLE CONFIDENCE IN THE ABILITIES OF THOSE ELECTED TO THE
COUNCILS, MANY OF WHOM ARE RESPECTED COMMUNITY LEADERS. DURING
EMBOFFS VISIT, THE CHAIRMAN OF THE FEDERAL ELECTORAL
COMMISSION, MICHAEL ANI, ANNOUNCED THAT NATIONWIDE ELECTIONS
TO THE CA WOULD BE HELD THIS COMING AUGUST. THE SMG IN PORT
HARCOURT RUEFULLY COMMENTED THAT RIVERS STATE MUST VOID THE
RESULTS OF ITS JUST COMPLETED ELECTION AND REPEAT THE EXERCISE IN
AUGUST.

5. LOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCILS (LCGS): ONLY SOME FOUR MONTHS OLD,
LGCS IN THE EAST ARE STILL GETTING ORGANIZED. THE RELATIONSHIPS
BETWEEN THE LGCS ON THE ONE HAND AND THE FERAL AND STATE
GOVERNMENTS AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES ON THE OTHER ARE STILL BEING
DEFINED. THE ONITSHA LGC LACKS ADEQUATE STAFFING, FUNDING,
AND AUTHORITY TO CARRY OUT ITS RESPONSIBILITIES. THE SECRETARY
TO THE LGC THERE (A FORMER FEDERAL CIVIL SERVANT WHO RETURNED
HOME DURING THE WAR) IS OPTIMISTIC, HOWEVER. THE RUAD OF STATE
'S APRIL 1 BUDGET SPEECH PROVIDED FOR AN "INCOME RATE TAX"
WHICH WILL GENERATE FUNDS FOR LGCS. ONITSHA EXPECTS TO REALIZE

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SOME TWO TO FOUR MILLION NAIRA ANNUALLY FROM THIS TAX. URBAN CENTERS ARE BETTER OFF IN THIS REGARD THAN MORE RURAL AREAS WHERE THE INCOME BASE IS MUCH LOWER. IT MAY BE SOME TIME BEFORE THIS EXPERIMENT IN ADMINISTRATIVE DECENTRALIZATION GETS ON TRACK.

6. MANPOWER NEEDS: WITHOUT EXCEPTION OFFICIALS CITED THE LACK SKILLED MANPOWER AS THE BIGGEST OBSTACLE TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. FEDERAL EFFORTS TO RECRUIT AND FILL STATE REQUIREMENTS HAVE NOT BEEN SUCCESSFUL. STATES PARTICULARLY NEED ARCHITECTS, ENGINEERS, DOCTORS AND OTHER PROFESSIONALS WHO TEND TO GRAVITATE TOWARD BETTER PAYING POSITIONS IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR. GRADUATES OF NIGERIA'S NATIONAL YOUTH SERVICE CORPS (NYSC) PROVIDE A GOOD SOURCE OF NEW RECRUITS FOR THE STATES. ACCORDING TO CHAIRMAN OF THE ANAMBRA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION THE VAST MAJORITY OF NYSC GRADUATES (WHOSE ROLES HE COMPARED TO THOSE FORMERLY PLAYED BY THE PEACE CORPS) ARE RECRUITED INTO PUBLIC SERVICE
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EACH YEAR. ONE WAY STATES HAVE ATTEMPTED TO MEET MANPOWER NEEDS HAS BEEN THROUGH SECONDMENT (EXCHANGE) OF PERSONNEL. SOME STATE GOVERNMENTS IN THE NORTH HAVE DISCRIMINATED AGAINST SECONDED IBOS AND DENIED THEM PROMOTION AND PERMANENT STATUS, IN EFFECT EMPLOYING THEM ON CONTRACT. ANAMBRA NAD IMO REPRESENTATIVES COMPLAINED ABOUT THE SITUATION AT A RECENT NATIONAL MEETING OF PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSIONERS. IF THE SITUATION IS NOT CORRECTD, ANAMBRA AND IMO INTEND TO RECALL THEIR PERSONNEL.

7. UNITED STATES PRESENCE: THERE WERE THE USUAL INQUIRIES IN ANAMBRA ABOUT POSSIBILITY OF RE-OPENING THE U.S. CONSULATE IN ENUGU. INTEREST IN HAVING A U.S. PRESENCE WAS ALSO VOICED BY RIVERS STATE OFFICIALS IN PORT HARCOURT. TRADE PROMOTION AND THE PUBLICIZING OF INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITES FROM AMERICAN FIRMS WOULD RANK HIGH AMONG THE FUNCTONS A U.S. OFFICE WOULD PERFORM. THE DESIRE FOR AMERICAN CAPITAL INVESTMENT AND TECHNOLOGY (IN THE FORM OF TRAINING, EQUIPMENT AND PERSONNEL) WAS A PERSISTENT THEME OF CONVERSATIONS WITH STATE OFFICIALS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
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Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
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From: LAGOS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2633063
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: VISIT TO ANAMBRA, IMO AND RIVERS STATES SUMMARY: AFTER A FOUR-DAY VISIT TO THREE EASTERN STATES, EMBOFFS REPORT THAT THE POST-GOWON REGIME ENJOYS G
TAGS: PINT, NI
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/4a7d179a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
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